Student Dining Service Changes

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To: Grinnell College Students <students@lyris.grinnell.edu>

Dear Students,

Throughout the pandemic, our dining hall employees have been working hard to provide the best local, nutritious, and sustainable dining options. Challenges such as the tight labor market and the need to observe COVID health protocols have occasionally necessitated shifts to our services, and we are committed to letting you know when and why changes are made that may impact your dining experience.

Starting with the Friday, April 22 evening dinner service, and through the rest of the spring semester, we will need to reintroduce the use of disposable dishware and cutlery. None of us like the waste and environmental impact of this move but we currently do not have enough staff to keep up with demand for reusable serving ware. Thank you to student leadership for their collaboration with us within this complex situation, and for being available (via the sustainability email contact listed below) for further problem-solving and student engagement.

To reduce our waste during this transition, we are attempting a hybrid solution approach. When possible, we will continue to supply reusable trays and bowls. Trays can be used as plates to reduce disposables, and we will have a special bin for compostable silverware, as its smaller size will not overwhelm the composting bins' capacity.

We would prefer to compost all disposable items, but the only available composting company has limited capacity and their bins cannot handle our entire dining hall load. Please do not use more disposables than necessary, assuming that they will be composted — despite our best efforts, universal composting is not an option at this time.

Additionally, we are reaching out to you for your partnership in helping us eliminate food waste. Using trays in place of plates can lead to an increase in food waste as there is room for more items on a tray than a plate. Whatever serving ware you use, please take what you need and remember you can always go back for seconds!

We will continue to assess serving ware options as the semester progresses. If you have sustainability suggestions, email them to sustainability@grinnell.edu. If you have dining service questions, email moserj@grinnell.edu.

We value your actions to help our dining staff as well as the appreciation you show them during these unusual times.

Thank you.

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